

FOREWORD

by Tony Pearce, Director General, Emergency Management Australia.



This is the first issue of the Australian Journal of Emergency Management developed since the election of the new government.

In this issue Emergency Management Australia (EMA) showcases the Australian Safer Communities Awards.

The ceremony celebrating the Australian Safer

Communities Awards national winners was held in Parliament House, Canberra on Thursday 14 February 2008, hosted by the Attorney-General, the Hon Robert McClelland MP.

The election of the new government sees EMA's governance arrangements largely unchanged. EMA will report to the Attorney-General, who has expressed strong and sincere interest in emergency management in Australia. A profile of the new Attorney-General is on page 3 of this issue.

The change of Government has resulted in a transfer of responsibility of three programs from the former Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTaRS) to EMA. This transfer of responsibilities covers several natural disaster programs - the Natural Disaster Relief & Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA), the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program (NDMP), and the Bushfire Mitigation Program.

This is the eighth year that EMA has been proud to organise the Australian Safer Communities Awards and they are a key part of our national role in developing community safety and self-reliance. Each year we have worked with the States and Territories to find projects that show innovative ways to raise awareness in the emergency management arena.

Disaster events over the past year have brought home to us the challenges for the whole community in managing the social and economic impact of destructive natural events. In this country recent events have included the Victorian bushfires in 2006 and 2007, the NSW storms mid-2007 and most recently the devastating floods in Queensland and NSW. I cannot stress enough how community preparedness is now a key policy issue for Australia in our efforts to adapt to the impacts of climate change and severe weather.

The new year has begun with a number of regions of Australia suffering extreme weather events. We have seen emergency management personnel from all levels of government working together tirelessly to ensure protection and safety of residents and property affected during these emergencies. We are privileged to work in such a cooperative and close knit sector which really does make a difference to people's lives.

May I advise that the Australian Disasters Conference, originally planned for early this year, is now to be held 10-13 February 2009 at the Canberra Convention Centre. Please check our website for more information on this important event: www.ema.gov.au

My colleagues and I are looking forward to a challenging, productive and exciting time ahead for emergency management in Australia.

Tony Pearce
Director-General
Emergency Management Australia